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SUBJECT: UNAMID CISS: DEPLOYMENT DIFFICULTIES REMAIN DESPITE SLIGHT
EASING OF OBSTACLES

REF : KHARTOUM 1933

11. (SBU) SUMMARY. The Chief of Integrated Support Services (CISS) for the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) addressed the Government of Sudan's December 5 rebuttal of charges leveled against it by UN Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guhenno on November 27 of imposing obstacles to UNAMID deployment. The CISS expected positive movement from the GoS on the Status of Forces Agreement, land issues and communications equipment in the coming days. He agreed with the GoS that the issue of the six helicopters was working itself out but considered that the contentious night flight issue remained to be truly tested, something the UN planned to do before Transfer of Authority. The CISS' honest assessment gives hope that despite a New York-Khartoum tit-for-tat, efforts at the ground level to expedite UNAMID deployment were producing positive results. However, the CISS warned that it would be pointless to push for deployment absent consensus with the GoS on the one issue unaddressed in its position paper: that of the force composition of the peacekeeping operation. END SUMMARY.

MINOR SOFA SUCCESS

12. (SBU) Following a December 7 meeting with the Deputy Force Commander and the Director of Administration, the CISS reported that in a "very positive" move, the GoS had agreed to begin negotiations on the UNAMID SOFA based on the UN's version of the agreement, which the CISS described as a mission-specific version of the model SOFA. By contrast, the GoS version had been fraught with unacceptable conditions that violated standard privileges and immunities fundamental to the model SOFA, including restrictions on communications and duty-free movement. The CISS did not know the exact date when SOFA negotiations would resume but was hopeful that the process was finally moving forward. His only reservation was in the type of visa recently issued to UNAMID personnel - an undefined "administrative" type vice diplomatic - which did not allow for shipment of personal effects. The CISS said that UNMIS was looking into this issue.

SIMILAR SMALL SUCCESS ON LAND ISSUE

13. (SBU) In another positive development, the CISS reported that Memoranda of Understanding had been signed earlier this week for UNAMID land in Zalingei and Nyala. He added that a UNAMID team would travel to El Geneina in the coming days for further discussions on outstanding issues of land size, access and water availability. "The onus is on us to decide," the CISS explained and added that he did not expect a problem with the West Darfur Wali on these issues. On the extension of the plot of UNAMID land in El Fasher, the CISS hoped that it could be finalized with the Wali later this week.

HELICOPTERS "WORKING THEMSELVES OUT"

14. (SBU) On the issue of deploying six UN helicopters to El Fasher, the CISS agreed with the GoS assessment that this was a "no issue" case. By moving these assets to Nyala vice El Fasher, the CISS explained the UN had "tested" the theory that the Sudanese Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) was delaying its authorization for them. He, like a representative of UNMIS Air Safety, agreed that parking space in El Fasher Airport is indeed a problem (exacerbated by the stationing of excess AMIS aircraft on the airfield while they awaited rotation out or incorporation by the UN) but added that space was a problem in every airport, Khartoum included; airport management, he argued, was the real issue. He did not dispute that GoS procedures on paperwork required for bringing aircraft in had hampered deployment, and he added that the UN was in close contact with the Government of Canada and its air contractor SkyLink to examine a phase-out approach for AMIS aircraft. He noted that there were weekly working group-level meetings with between the UN and CAA to resolve these types of issues.

NIGHT FLIGHT RULES STILL TO BE TESTED

15. (SBU) On the much-hyped issue of night flight permission, the CISS disagreed with the GoS contention that it was the UN's responsibility to upgrade Darfur airfields to accommodate 24-hour operations. He said that the UNAMID "supercamps" would institute their own air operations but acknowledged that CAA approval would be needed regardless of where the aircrafts would land. He agreed that the GoS was in violation of several agreements, including the Darfur Peace Agreement, in imposing restrictions on flights and said that the UN would put this to the test when it got its helicopters on the ground and began normal training with them, training which would include night flying familiarization. He hoped this "test" would come before December 31 Transfer of Authority.

"IT'S NOT ABOUT THE EQUIPMENT"

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16. (SBU) The CISS reported that the UNAMID DOA was meeting on December 8 with the GoS on the issue of UNAMID communications equipment held at the El Fasher Airport, and he expected the equipment to be released and delivered "straight away" on December 19. The CISS assured that all equipment had been brought in according to correct procedures and he considered the GoS reservations to the contrary simply rhetoric; e.g., the GoS' objecting to use of equipment destined for UNMIS in the South, despite the UN's sanctioned practice of sharing equipment between peacekeeping operations. "It's not about the equipment," he said, "It's more to do with our freedom to communicate and the precedent it would set for others if we succeed in securing our own systems" [NOTE: The UN plans to run its own satellites in El Fasher and in major AMIS sites. END NOTE]. The CISS insisted that it was not necessary for the UN to notify the GoS of the placement of its communications equipment once it had been cleared, as the GoS was asking, citing this stipulation as an example of the GoS' attempt to limit UNAMID freedom of movement.

UNCERTAINTY OVER USE OF EL OBEID LOGISTICS BASE

17. (SBU) According to the CISS, the UN was about to submit a formal request to the North Kordofan Wali for use of the land just outside the El Obeid logistics base in order to accommodate UNAMID assets and resources. The CISS made clear that only common facilities would be shared between UNAMID and UNMIS at this location and that the Wali was fully aware of this fact. Still, he lamented that the Wali was unable to render a final decision for UNAMID use of the facilities, having to go back to Khartoum at every turn. As a result, the CISS did not expect this issue to be resolved in the near future, warning instead "We cannot deploy the mission if we have to go through several layers of approval every time, and we cannot keep going to Khartoum with every request."

18. (SBU) COMMENT. Just as U/SYG Guhenno was not considered to be lying in his assessment of GoS obstructionism (reftel), neither, it seems, was the GoS in its rebuttal of his claims. However, two half-truths do not a deployment solution make. What was left out may in fact be the crux of the issues, and while working-level

discussions between the UN and the GoS on ways to expedite UNAMID deployment may be producing minor results, bigger issues for higher-level players loom, not least, according to the CISS, that of UNAMID force composition. Until the GoS agrees to the October 2 list of troop contributors, "it is pointless to push for deployment," as consensus with the GoS is the only way to ensure a green light for the force and everything that goes with it. END COMMENT.

19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ